A/73/35

United Nations

# Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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# Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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## Letter of transmittal

[4 September 2018]

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly and circulation to all the competent bodies of the United Nations for necessary action, as appropriate, in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 10 of Assembly resolution 72/13 of 30 November 2017.

The report covers the period from 6 September 2017 to 4 September 2018.

(*Signed*) Cheikh **Niang**
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

# Chapter I
## Introduction

1. The present report by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/13, adopted on 30 November 2017. It covers the implementation by the Committee of its programme of work (A/AC.183/2018/1), formulated to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. Its objectives include maintaining international awareness, mobilizing efforts aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, enhancing international solidarity with the plight of the Palestinian people and supporting the Government of the State of Palestine in its capacity-building efforts towards a viable and sustainable future independent State of Palestine.

2. Chapter II consists of a review of the political context relating to the question of Palestine by the Committee during the reporting period, from 6 September 2017 to 4 September 2018.

3. Chapters III and IV outline the mandate of the Committee as set out by the General Assembly and provide information on the membership of the Committee and the organization of its work.

4. Chapter V covers the action taken by the Committee, including its participation in meetings of the Security Council and its continuing dialogue with intergovernmental organizations and civil society. It also covers international conferences, delegation visits and capacity-building workshops organized by the Committee, as well as other mandated activities carried out and events held by the Division for Palestinian Rights on behalf of the Committee.

5. Chapter VI provides an overview of the special information programme on the question of Palestine implemented by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/12 of 30 November 2017.

6. The conclusions and recommendations of the Committee to the General Assembly are set out in chapter VII of the report.

# Chapter II

## Review of the political context relating to the question of Palestine

### Jerusalem

7. During the reporting period, several unilateral measures threatened the status of Jerusalem and the consensus on the two-State solution. In October and November 2017, the Israeli authorities approved multiple building permits for housing units in settlements in East Jerusalem.[1] On 6 December, the United States of America announced its recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and its intention to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Secretary-General immediately reiterated that unilateral measures would jeopardize the prospect of peace for Israelis and Palestinians[2] and that Jerusalem remained a final status issue. The Committee issued a statement[3] calling upon the United States to rescind its decision, stressing that there was no alternative to the two-State solution. On 14 May 2018, the United States inaugurated its embassy in Jerusalem to coincide with the seventieth anniversary of its recognition of Israel. In the week that followed, Guatemala and Paraguay opened embassies in Jerusalem. In late May, Czechia reopened its honorary consulate in Jerusalem; however, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Czechia issued a statement expressing full respect for the common European Union position of considering Jerusalem as the future capital of two States.

8. On 2 January, the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, passed a bill that stipulated that any measure to relinquish control over any portion of Jerusalem to a foreign entity would require a two-third majority in the Knesset. On 17 July, the Knesset passed an amendment to the law on administrative affairs courts, transferring judicial authority over a range of issues in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from the High Court of Justice to the Jerusalem District Court, including freedom of information requests, planning and constructions matters, entry permits into Israel and freedom of movement and access.

9. On 3 July, the Prime Minister of Israel lifted the ban that prohibited members of the Knesset from visiting the Temple Mount, and on 8 and 9 July, several members of the Knesset violated the media ban by filming their visits. On 18 July, the Knesset passed a bill entitled "Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People", which provided that the State viewed the development of Jewish settlements as a national value and would act to encourage and promote their establishment and consolidation. The law will apply within Israel as well as in areas annexed since 1967, including East Jerusalem. On 21 July, the Minister of Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage of Israel called upon Jews to "ascend the Mount". On 27 July, on the first anniversary of the 2017 unrest at the Holy Esplanade, 10 Palestinians and 4 Israeli police officers were injured in clashes at the site (see S/PV/8329). The Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority conducted a series of meetings with Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders in Jerusalem to ensure that the status quo was preserved at the holy sites.

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[1] See https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_20_november_2017.pdf.

[2] See https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/12/638412-issue-jerusalem-must-be-resolved-through-direct-negotiations-between-parties-un.

[3] Available at www.un.org/unispal/document/committee-of-palestinian-rights-committee-statement-on-recognition-of-jerusalem-as-the-capital-of-israel/.

**The Gaza Strip**

10. The political and security situation in the Gaza Strip continued to be volatile. Lack of progress in implementing the intra-Palestinian reconciliation agreement, compounded by the Israeli blockade and access restrictions, continued to aggravate an already dire humanitarian situation.[4]

11. From 30 March to 15 May 2018, thousands of Palestinians staged the "Great March of Return", weekly demonstrations to mark Land Day along the fence separating Gaza from Israel and call for the right of Palestine refugees to return to their homes lost in 1948. Israeli forces responded with live and other ammunition, killing and wounding civilians. On 31 March, the Secretary-General called for an independent inquiry into those acts of violence. On 6 April, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that unjustified recourse to live fire could amount to wilful killing of civilians, which would be a breach of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court warned that acts of violence against civilians would constitute a crime under the Rome Statute, adding that the situation in Palestine was under preliminary examination by her office. The Committee issued a statement[5] on 14 May demanding that the occupying power abide by its obligation to protect civilians under its control, in accordance with international law, and called for an end to the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip that continued to punish the Gazan population collectively. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that, between 30 March and 16 August, 177 Palestinians, including 29 children, had been killed and 18,006 had been wounded in the context of demonstrations and hostilities in Gaza.

12. July and August witnessed the largest escalation in violence in Gaza since the conflict of 2014. After one Israeli soldier was killed and another wounded in gunfire shot from Gaza on 20 July, Israeli airstrikes and ensuing clashes led to the deaths of more than 20 Palestinians, including eight children, and to more than 1,000 Palestinians suffering injuries. On 21 July, the Secretary-General called upon Hamas and other Palestinian militants to cease the launching of rockets and incendiary kites and provocations along the fence, and stressed that Israel must exercise restraint to avoid inflaming the situation further. With support from Egypt and the United Nations, an informal ceasefire was reached on 9 August. From 17 July to 15 August, the fishing zone was reduced by Israel from nine to three nautical miles. On 2 August, Israel reinstated the ban on the entry of fuel into Gaza, bringing critical services to the brink of collapse and prompting the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to call for United Nations-purchased emergency fuel to be immediately allowed in to keep hospitals and essential water and sanitation facilities running.[6] On 22 August, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs informed the Security Council of a critical shortage of medicines and of funding for United Nations emergency fuel supplies (see S/PV.8329).

[4] See www.ochaopt.org/content/only-a-marginal-improvement-humanitarian-situation-gaza-strip-wake-intra-palestinian.

[5] Available at www.un.org/unispal/document/palestinian-rights-committee-statement-on-the-grave-situation-in-gaza/.

[6] See www.ochaopt.org/content/entry-emergency-fuel-urgently-needed-avoid-closure-hospitals-and-overflow-sewage-gaza.

**Efforts to resume the peace process**

13. On 20 February, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, presented to the Security Council a peace plan[7] calling for a multilateral international mechanism emanating from an international peace conference bringing together Israel, the State of Palestine and international stakeholders, notably the permanent members of the Security Council and the Quartet, in the same framework as the Conference for Peace in the Middle East held in Paris in 2017 and the meeting proposed to be held in Moscow in resolution 1850 (2008). He said that the outcome of the conference should include, inter alia, the admission of the State of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations and the establishment of an international multilateral mechanism to facilitate time-bound negotiations between the two parties to resolve all permanent status issues. The terms of reference for negotiations would include respect for international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and signed agreements; the preservation of the principle of two States; the acceptance of minimal land swaps; East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine; ensuring the security of two States without undermining the independence and sovereignty of either of them; and a just and agreed solution for the Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), as well as support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), pending a just resolution for the refugees issue. The League of Arab States echoed the calls for a multilateral mechanism.[8]

**Intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts**

14. On 12 October 2017, with the support of Egypt, Fatah and Hamas signed an agreement to enable the Government of the State of Palestine to resume its responsibilities in Gaza. The agreement was welcomed by the Committee. On 1 November, the Government of the State of Palestine regained control over Gaza crossings, while on 18 November, the Rafah crossing opened under government control for the first time in a decade. However, on 25 January 2018, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported to the Security Council that the implementation of the agreement had effectively ground to a halt, as Hamas and Fatah were unable to agree on key issues. On 13 March, the situation was further strained by an assassination attempt against the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, Rami Hamdallah, during his visit to Gaza. Negotiations facilitated by Egypt have since resumed between Hamas and Fatah.

**Protection of Palestinian civilians**

15. The reporting period was marked by almost daily military incursions and raids by Israeli forces and clashes with young Palestinian people and Palestinian protesters in many parts of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. On 22 May, the State of Palestine submitted a State referral to the Prosecutor of the International Court of Justice, requesting investigation of past, ongoing and future crimes in all parts of the territory of the State of Palestine. On 13 July, the International Court of Justice called upon the "victims of the situation in Palestine" to approach the court with reports about crimes committed against them.

16. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, from 1 September 2017 to 30 July 2018, 171 Palestinian civilians were killed and 24,938 were injured (see figure I and the table below it), while attacks on Israelis resulted in five civilian deaths and 41 people injured in conflict-related casualties. Continued and disproportionate violence against Palestinian civilians and incitement have perpetuated mutual fear and suspicion. On 14 August, the Secretary-General issued a report on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population (A/ES-10/794),

[7] See www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13213.doc.htm.

[8] See http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=OyEgt7a96306934317aOyEgt7.

pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/20, in which he laid out options for affording better protection to the Palestinian civilian population, including by means of a more robust presence of the United Nations on the ground; dedicated civilian observers; better humanitarian access; and a mandated United Nations mission to provide physical protection. He noted that, in order to be viable, each of those options would require the cooperation of the parties concerned, including Israel, the sustained cessation of hostilities and additional resources.

Figure I
**Number of Palestinians and Israelis killed during the reporting period**[a]

*Source*: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.[9]
[a] As at 30 July 2018.

**Number of Palestinians and Israelis injured during the reporting period**[a]

| | *September* | *October* | *November* | *December* | *January* | *February* | *March* | *April* | *May* | *June* | *July* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Palestinians | 125 | 108 | 90 | 4 580 | 542 | 909 | 2 879 | 4 968 | 7 306 | 1 827 | 1 604 |
| Israelis | 2 | 4 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 7 |

*Source*: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.[10]
[a] As at 30 July 2018.

**Settlements**

17. Settlements have continued to expand, despite several Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), in which all settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were declared illegal under international law. Reporting on behalf of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process noted that, during the period from 20 September to 18 December 2017, Israel approved the construction of 1,200 units in the occupied West Bank. Plans were also advanced to build units for settlers evicted from illegal outposts under court orders. The authorities also conditionally approved building permits for 31 housing units in the H2 zone of Hebron, the first such approvals since 2001. During the period from 18 December 2017 to 25 March 2018, Israel advanced 22 plans for some 1,500 housing units in Area C settlements. For the period from 26 March to 12 June, Israel advanced, approved or tendered out some 3,500 housing units in settlements in Area C, one third of which were in settlements in outlying locations deep in the West Bank. On

[9] See also www.ochaopt.org/content/monthly-figures.

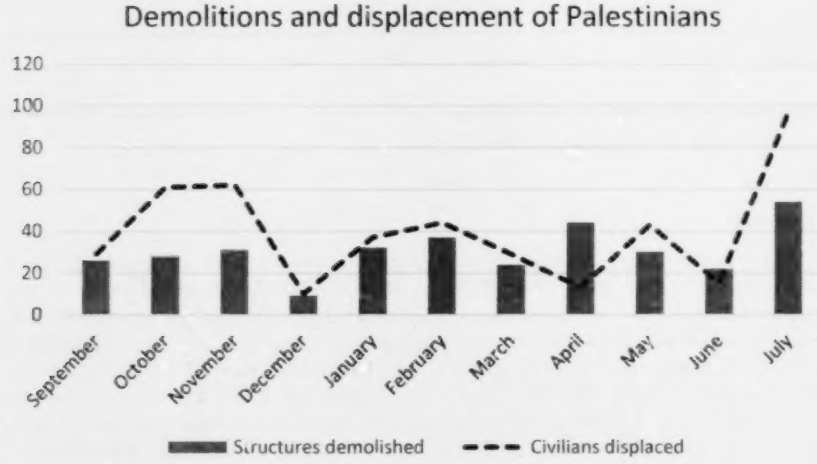
1 August, Israel confirmed its intention to legalize the settler outpost of Adei Ad, in the first such instance since 2014.

18. On 23 January, in line with European Union policy, the Parliament of Denmark passed a resolution with reference to Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) urging the inclusion of a clear statement in future agreements between Denmark and Israel indicating their inapplicability to occupied territory and encouraging the Government of Denmark to strengthen its guidance to private and public investors. On 11 July, the Seanad Éireann (the upper house) of Ireland passed a bill prohibiting trade with and economic support for settlements in occupied territory.[10]

**Demolitions and displacement**

19. Demolitions and confiscation of Palestinian-owned structures continued in 2018 across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (see figure II), albeit at a marginally lower rate than in the previous year (see S/2018/614). In his briefings to the Security Council, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process repeatedly expressed concern[11] about Israeli plans to evict communities, including Bedouin herding communities through demolitions. On 19 July, the Special Coordinator, among others, called upon Israel to cancel plans to demolish the Khan al-Ahmar — Abu al-Helu Bedouin community's dwellings, in Area C.[12] The demolitions were accompanied by residency restrictions on those evicted, especially in East Jerusalem, and denial of access to essential services, such as water and sanitation (see A/72/564, para. 64). On 1 August, the High Court of Justice of Israel ordered a hold on the demolition of the village of Khan al-Ahmar, stating that it did not find sufficient reason for the action.

Figure II
**Demolitions of Palestinian structures and displacement of Palestinians during the reporting period**[a]




*Source*: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
[a] As at 30 July 2018.

[10] See www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/11/irish-senate-approves-ban-on-products-from-israeli-settlements.
[11] See S/PV.8072, S/PV.8108, S/PV.8128, S/PV.8138, S/PV.8139, S/PV.8167 and S/PV.8183.
[12] https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/nickolay-mladenov-special-coordinator-middle-east-peace-13.

### Detention, trial and imprisonment

20. During the reporting period, the number of Palestinians arrested by Israeli forces ranged from 300 to 700 a month. On 19 December 2017, Palestinian teenager Ahed Tamimi, aged 16, was arrested and sentenced to eight months in prison for slapping an Israeli soldier. On 13 February, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 and the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued a joint statement[13] stating that the facts of the case did not appear to justify the teenager's detention before her trial, in particular given the concerns expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. They observed in their statement that Israel detained and prosecuted between 500 and 700 Palestinian children in military courts every year. As of June 2018, 5,667 Palestinians remained in Israeli prisons, charged for offences related to the Israeli occupation.[9]

### United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and Palestine refugees

21. UNRWA, which provides core essential services to Palestine refugees in the region, was confronted with a major shortfall in budget during the reporting period, owing to an increase in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the growing extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. Despite new contributions, as of June 2018, the Agency continued to face a shortfall of $248 million in its programming budget of $440 million. Its ability to continue education programmes is in question. In that context, UNRWA has launched a global fund-raising campaign.

### Impact of the occupation on Palestinian women

22. Women continue to be adversely affected by the occupation. In a report issued in May 2018, the International Labour Organization (ILO) determined that women's unemployment rate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was now the highest in the world, rising to 47.4 per cent in 2017, from 44.6 the previous year.[14] In the Gaza Strip, even though job vacancy rates have shrunk steadily, the number of women seeking employment has increased by 200 per cent. On 8 June, the United Nations Population Fund reported that the negative impact of the blockade of Gaza had worsened women's conditions, by increasing psychological stress and threatening the stability of families. Mothers whose children were injured in the Great March of Return protests reported increased gender-based violence,[15] and the risk of economic violence increased for women widowed during Israeli military action against protestors.

### Freedom of movement

23. The numerous restrictions to freedom of movement imposed by Israel, as an occupying power, had a severe impact on access to economic, social and cultural rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and on the enjoyment of the right to family life (see A/HRC/37/38). Gazan residents continued to face Israeli restrictions on movement into Israel through the Erez crossing (see figure III). During the month of Ramadan, Egypt kept the Rafah crossing open.[16] Since 5 August, the import of

[13] Available at www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22654&LangID=E.

[14] See www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_629263.pdf.

[15] See http://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Situation%20Report%20Gaza%20-%208%20June%202018%20-%20Great%20Return%20March%20-%20final.pdf.

[16] See https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/statement_by_un_special_coordinator_mladenov_-_18_may_2018.pdf.

cooking gas to Gaza has compensated for shortages due to Israeli restrictions.[17] From 9 July to 15 August, Israel temporarily suspended the import and export of all items through the Kerem Shalom crossing, except for basic humanitarian supplies.[18] On 19 August, Israel closed the Erez crossing for Gaza and West Bank residents, except for humanitarian cases.

24. The enforcement measures used by the Israeli authorities in Gaza undermine the right of Palestinian fishermen and farmers to a livelihood and have a devastating impact on the rights to life and to physical and mental health (see A/HRC/31/44, para. 43). The approval rate of Israeli exit permits from Gaza decreased from 72 per cent during the previous reporting period to 32.8 per cent during the present reporting period.[19] Restrictions on movement also severely affected access to health care. The World Health Organization reported that dozens of patients died while waiting for their permits to be approved or after their applications had been denied.[20] Impediments to Palestinians' freedom of movement were further consolidated in the H2 zone of Hebron with the addition of new closures and the fortification of existing checkpoints. Israel continued to revoke the East Jerusalem residency status of Palestinians as a form of collective punishment (see A/72/565, paras. 21–25), violating the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose residence (see A/HRC/37/43, para. 54, and A/HRC/34/38, paras. 62–66). Restrictions on Palestinians' access to agricultural land and to critical natural resources in Area C remained in place, and markets in occupied East Jerusalem remained out of reach, severely curbing livelihood opportunities (see A/HRC/37/38, para. 42).

[17] See https://www.ochaopt.org/content/protection-civilians-report-31-july-13-august-2018.

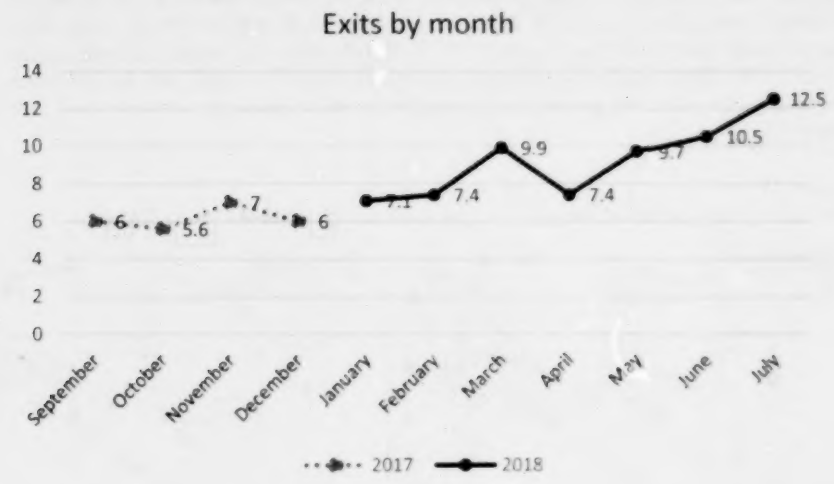
[18] See https://unsco.unmissions.org/statement-un-special-coordinator-mladenov-new-restrictions-kerem-shalom-crossing.

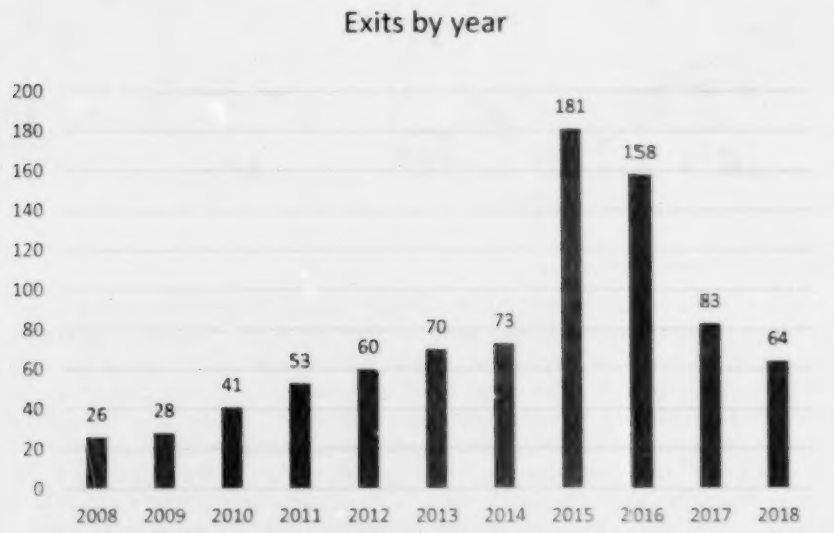
[19] Palestinian General Authority of Civil Affairs communications to OHCHR, 16 and 18 October 2016 and 26 November 2017.

[20] See www.emro.who.int/pse/publications-who/monthly-referral-reports.html.

**Figure III**
**Exits and entries of people at the Erez crossing in Gaza[a]**

(Thousands)




*Source*: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.[21]

[a] As at 3 August 2018.

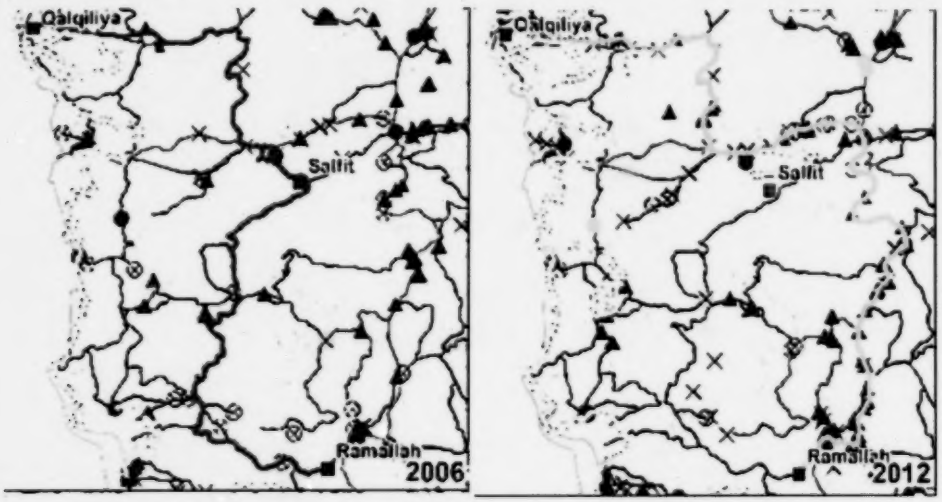
25. ILO noted that Palestinian access to farming remained restricted around and within Israeli settlements, as well as in the seam zone, where prior coordination or special permits were required. The approval rate for permit applications to access land in this area during the olive harvest fell from 58 per cent in 2016 to 55 per cent in

[21] See www.ochaopt.org/page/gaza-crossings-movement-people-and-goods.

2017. Access to education, training and employment for Palestinians living on the West Bank side of "the Barrier" also remained severely constrained.[14]

26. In a research paper published on 27 March, the World Bank showed that the route deviations forced by the construction of the West Bank barrier by Israel had an economic impact, as seen in the deviation between 2006 and 2012 in the route from Ramallah to Qalqilyah (see figure IV). The World Bank also found that, during the period 2005–2012, market access constraints resulting from road closure obstacles reduced gross domestic product per capita in the West Bank by 4.1 to 6.1 per cent annually.[22]

Figure IV
**Impact of "the Barrier" on freedom of movement inside the West Bank**




*Source*: World Bank report, 27 March 2018.

**Socioeconomic situation**

27. In a report released on 3 April, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development stated that restrictions on movement and access by Israel had stifled investment and limited the Palestinian private sector to small-scale operations with low capital intensity and efficiency.[23] Israel continued to maintain restrictions in several areas, including telecommunication spectrum, airspace, tourism, the exploitation of natural gas resources and water. Since the onset of the occupation, in 1967, Palestinians have lost access to more than 60 per cent of West Bank land and more than two thirds of grazing land, while, in the Gaza Strip, Palestinians have lost access to half the cultivable area. In the waters off Gaza, 85 per cent of fishery resources are inaccessible to Palestinian fishermen owing to limitations imposed by Israel on the distance that fishing boats may sail off the coast of Gaza, in violation of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea.

28. The occupation has severely affected economic prospects for young Palestinian people. In its report released on 30 May,[14] ILO found that the unemployment rate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had now risen to the highest level in the world, at 27.4 per cent in 2017, and that women and young people were particularly affected.

[22] See http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/135611522172009978/pdf/WPS8385.pdf.
[23] See http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/gdsapp2017d2_en.pdf.

The Palestinian labour force participation rate was currently the eleventh lowest in the world. A large number of Palestinian workers employed in Israel did not enjoy social benefits and were not employed with a written contract. ILO also observed that ending the occupation was a prerequisite for realizing workers' rights and for making decent work a reality.

**Palestinian role in international institutions**

29. In a sign of growing recognition of the role that the State of Palestine could play in multilateral forums, the State of Palestine was elected on 24 July 2018 to chair the Group of 77 group at the United Nations in 2019. Before that, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had elected the State of Palestine to its Bureau at its 12th session, held in Jeju, Republic of Korea, from 4 to 9 December 2017.

30. In a welcome breakthrough, on 19 April 2018, Palestinian and Israeli diplomats agreed on the text of a UNESCO resolution on occupied Jerusalem. Earlier on, on 12 October 2017, the United States had announced its withdrawal from UNESCO, accusing the agency of "anti-Israel bias". On 22 December 2017, Israel also announced its withdrawal from the agency. Both withdrawals, if followed through, will come into effect at the end of 2018.

**Action in the General Assembly**

31. On 22 December 2017, at an emergency special session and following a failed attempt in the Security Council,[24] the General Assembly adopted resolution ES-10/19 on the status of Jerusalem, after the unilateral decision by the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, in contravention of Security Council resolution 478 (1980). In its resolution, adopted by a majority of 128 countries in favour, to 9 against and 35 abstentions, the Assembly stressed that Jerusalem was a final status issue and affirmed that any decisions that purported to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of Jerusalem had no legal effect and were null and void.[25] On 13 June, at an emergency meeting, the Assembly adopted resolution ES-10/20 by 120 votes in favour to 8 against, deploring the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians, in particular in the Gaza Strip. It requested the Secretary-General to submit a report within 60 days outlining proposals on ways and means for ensuring the safety of Palestinian civilians, including recommendations regarding an international protection mechanism.[26]

32. From 17 to 20 July 2018, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories visited Amman, where it met community representatives, non-governmental organizations, officials from the Government of the State of Palestine and United Nations representatives. The delegation was told that discriminatory measures against the Palestinians were on the rise in a climate of impunity, with the continuation by the occupying power of deliberate and unlawful policies and practices. The Government of Israel maintained its practice of

[24] See further details below, under "Action in the Security Council".

[25] For the full text of this and other relevant resolutions adopted on the question of Palestine in 2017, see the Committee's publication on resolutions, decisions and voting records of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council relating to the Question of Palestine.

[26] See also www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12028.doc.htm.

non-cooperation with the Committee and the delegation was unable to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

**Action in the Security Council**

33. On 18 December, owing to the negative vote exercised by a permanent member, the Security Council failed to adopt (with 14 votes in favour and 1 against) draft resolution S/2017/1060, tabled by Egypt, in which regret was expressed at the unilateral decision of a Member State to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. On 15 May, the Council also failed to put to vote a draft resolution by Kuwait to condemn the killing of civilians in Gaza.

34. The Secretary-General continued to use his good offices to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict based on the two-State solution. On 20 February, he expressed concern to the Security Council that the global consensus for a two-State solution could be eroding and that obstacles on the ground had the potential to create an irreversible one-State reality (see S/PV.8183). He also noted that conditions for Palestinians in Gaza were dire and felt that the shortfalls in the funding of UNRWA were a matter of international concern and called for concerted action by all parties.[27]

35. In the monthly meetings of the Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question,[11] the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process reported that the failure of the forces of moderation was a win for the forces of radicalization and that unilateral moves that blocked the way back to the negotiating table would drive the situation further towards a one-State reality of perpetual occupation. He also highlighted the need to maintain support for Palestine refugees as a fundamental issue to the pursuit of peace and security in the region. The Special Coordinator also presented three reports on behalf of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the third of which was presented on 19 June and, in response to repeated requests by the Committee and other Member States, made available in writing.[28]

36. On 22 February, Council members attended the Arria-formula meeting entitled "Prospects for the two-State solution for peace". Participants in the briefing found that challenges to the prospect of a two-State solution included tensions regarding Jerusalem; a sharp deterioration in the humanitarian situation, in particular in Gaza; the financial difficulties faced by UNRWA; and the shrinking space for civil society, in particular human rights defenders and civilian protesters.

**Action in the Economic and Social Council**

37. On 25 July, ECOSOC adopted resolution 2017/30, in which it stressed the urgency of achieving without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that had begun in 1967. The Council stated that it was convinced that the Israeli occupation had gravely impeded the efforts to achieve environmentally sustainable development and a sound economic environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It demanded that Israel comply with the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed in Paris on 29 April 1994.

[27] See also the Committee's monthly bulletins for relevant statements of the Secretary-General and other United Nations officials on the question of Palestine (available at www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/monthly-bulletin/).

[28] Available at www.un.org/undpa/en/speeches-statements/20062017/middleeast.

**Action in the Human Rights Council**

38. In a report (A/HRC/37/39) submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 31/36, in which the Council called for a database of all business enterprises either explicitly linked to the settlements or forming part of processes that enabled and supported the establishment, expansion and maintenance of the settlements (see A/HRC/22/63, para. 4), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) identified 206 companies that would be named in a future update after they had all been contacted. While asking for more resources to update the database, OHCHR stated that the presence of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory served to depress the Palestinian economy and reduce opportunities for Palestinian businesses to thrive, which had a direct effect on the job market.

39. On 23 March, the Human Rights Council adopted four resolutions relating to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Council reaffirmed the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (resolution 37/34); demanded that Israel cease all practices and actions that violated the human rights of the Palestinian people (resolution 37/35); demanded that Israel cease all settlement activities in all the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, and called upon Israel to cease immediately all actions causing the alteration of the character, status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (resolution 37/36); and called upon all duty bearers and United Nations bodies to pursue the implementation of recommendations of, inter alia, the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people (resolution 37/37).

40. In his second report to the Human Rights (A/72/556), in October 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 stated that the role of Israel as occupier had crossed the line into illegality, and he recommended to the General Assembly to commission a study and consider the advantages of seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legality of the occupation. He also recommended to the Assembly to consider the adoption of a Uniting-for-Peace resolution with respect to the question of Palestine. In his third report (A/HRC/37/75), considered at the thirty-seventh session of the Council, the Special Rapporteur emphasized the urgent need to improve the desperate state of right to health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the plight of Palestinian children.

41. At the same session, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted a report on ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/37/41), pursuant to resolution 34/28. In that report, the Commissioner called for accountability for the escalation of hostilities in Gaza in 2014 and observed that recent developments undermined confidence in the Israeli military justice system, as they appeared to reinforce a culture of impunity. The Commissioner also highlighted a lack of accountability for alleged violations impeding the work of human rights defenders and journalists in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

42. On 23 July, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights briefed the Committee, stressing that the root causes of the Great March of Return protests in Gaza needed to be addressed. He stated that only an end to the occupation could bring about lasting peace.[29]

[29] See www.un.org/unispal/document/human-rights-commissioner-briefing-to-ceirpp-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-the-opt/.

# Chapter III
## Mandate of the Committee

43. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly by resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and to return to the homes and property from which they had been displaced, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. The mandate of the Committee has evolved considerably over the years into greater advocacy for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the mobilization of assistance. Additional information about the Committee is available on the website maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat at http://www.un.org/unispal/.

44. On 30 November 2017, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Committee (resolution 72/13), requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights with the necessary resources to carry out its programme of work (resolution 72/11) and the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat (resolution 72/12). The Assembly also adopted resolution 72/14, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", in which it reaffirmed the near-consensus international position regarding the components of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution.

45. The work of the Committee is fully aligned with the decisions of the main United Nations intergovernmental bodies, such as the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as with the work of the Secretary-General and the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, with which it collaborates extensively.

# Chapter IV
# Organization of work

## A. Membership and officers

46. The Committee is composed of 26 Member States, representing different regional groups and supporting the international consensus for a two-State solution: Afghanistan, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, Cyprus, Ecuador, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

47. The 24 observers of the Committee are Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam and Yemen, as well as the State of Palestine, the African Union, the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

48. The day-to-day tasks of the Committee are undertaken by its Bureau. At its 388th meeting, on 5 February 2018, the Committee elected, in their personal capacity, Fodé Seck (Senegal) as Chair; Mahmoud Saikal (Afghanistan), Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba), Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia), Neville Melvin Gertze (Namibia) and María Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) as Vice-Chairs; and Carmelo Inguanez (Malta) as Rapporteur. At its 390th meeting, on 23 July 2018, the Committee elected Cheikh Niang (Senegal) as the new Chair. The State of Palestine participates in the Bureau's work as an observer.

49. The Committee members and observers have actively advocated the rights of the Palestinian people, including in the Security Council. Currently, a member and an observer of the Committee, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Kuwait, respectively, serve on the Council as elected members.

## B. Participation in the work of the Committee

50. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all Member States of the United Nations and observers wishing to participate in its work were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, the State of Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer. All efforts were made by the Committee to guarantee participation of civil society organizations, including from Israel.

# Chapter V
# Action taken by the Committee

## A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/13

### 1. Action taken in the Security Council

51. During the debates held by the Security Council on 18 October 2017 and 25 January, 26 April and 24 July 2018, the Committee delivered statements highlighting the deteriorating situation and calling upon the Council to uphold its responsibilities, take appropriate actions and contribute to a just, comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the conflict.[30]

### 2. Action taken by the Bureau of the Committee

52. The members of the Bureau represented the Committee at all international conferences organized by the Committee and in all delegation visits, and they chaired and moderated various sessions of the conferences. On the margins of the conferences and during delegation visits, they held meetings with senior officials from the respective host countries.

53. On 3 October 2017 and 2 August 2018, respectively, the Bureau held its third and fourth annual retreats. Issues discussed on those occasions included the programmes of work of the Committee for 2018 and 2019, including priorities and proposals for the holding of international events; and better outreach to and engagement with Member States (including in the Security Council, in particular its elected members), regional organizations and civil society. Several strategic decisions were taken to guide the future work of the Committee.

54. On 15 August, the Bureau met with the Secretary-General and conveyed its concern regarding the deteriorating humanitarian, economic and social situation in Gaza and the urgency to establish a protection mechanism for Palestinian civilians, following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution ES-10/20. The Bureau also conveyed the need to solve as a matter of urgency the shortfall in funding of UNRWA.

55. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, issued three statements: in December 2017, to call upon the United States to rescind its decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; in February 2018, to share the outcome of the Committee delegation visit to Uganda; and in May, to call upon Israel to abide by its international obligations as an occupying power and ensure the protection of civilians in Gaza.

## B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 72/13 and 72/11

### 1. Committee meetings at Headquarters

56. During the reporting period, the Committee held six open meetings in New York, in addition to the six informal meetings of its Bureau. At the open meetings, the Committee received updates on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, reports of meetings organized by the Committee, reports from members of the

[30] See S/PV.8072, S/PV.8167, S/PV.8244 and S/PV.8316.

Committee on their activities in support of the Palestinian people, and briefings from invited speakers. Key aspects of those meetings included the following:

(a) At its 385th high-level meeting, on 15 November 2017, the Committee approved for submission to the General Assembly four draft resolutions entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" and "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", respectively. At the same meeting, the Committee heard a briefing by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967;

(b) The 386th high-level meeting, on 29 November, marked the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(c) At its 387th meeting, on 14 December, the Committee heard the report of the Committee delegation visit to the United Republic of Tanzania and of its meetings with civil society organizations;

(d) At its 388th meeting, on 5 February 2018, attended by the Secretary-General, the Committee re-elected its Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur and adopted its annual programme of work;

(e) At its 389th meeting, on 28 March, the Committee heard a briefing by the Director of the UNRWA New York Liaison Office. The report of the Committee delegation visit to Uganda was also presented;

(f) At its 390th meeting, on 23 July, the Committee reviewed reports on its delegation visit to Panama, the United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine, held at Headquarters on 17 and 18 May, and the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, held in Rabat from 26 to 28 June. At the same meeting, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights briefed the Committee on the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the funding shortfall of UNRWA and the adoption by Israel of the discriminatory "Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People".

### 2. United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine: "70 Years after 1948 — Lessons to Achieve a Sustainable Peace"

57. The United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine, held at Headquarters on 17 and 18 May, brought together Palestinian, Israeli and international experts and representatives of the diplomatic community and civil society to highlight the need to address issues related to the 1948 war and subsequent mass displacement of Palestinians. Panels focused on an evaluation of the Nakbah ("the catastrophe") and its continued relevance today, the ongoing displacement of Palestinians, questions of accountability and transitional justice.

58. Key findings and recommendations included: the fact that ending the Israeli occupation was a necessary prerequisite for the freedom of the Palestinian people and a two-State solution; the need to address the root causes of the conflict and the interlinkages among development, peace and security, and human rights; the need for the international community to acknowledge the Nakbah and to hold Israel accountable for crimes committed in 1948 and thereafter; the need to establish a truth-seeking, reparations and reconciliation mechanism prior to a political agreement; the need to remind Israel of its obligations under international law and to request that it provide better international protection to Palestinians, including refugees; and the need to treat Palestine refugees as dispossessed nationals of a country — Palestine — rather than as stateless refugees.

59. On 15 May, just before the Forum was held and to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Nakbah, the Committee supported the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York in organizing a commemorative concert by a renowned Palestinian music band, Trio Joubran.

60. On 16 May, closed consultations were held with civil society organizations based in Palestine and Israel.

### 3. Annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

61. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 29 November 2017 at Headquarters, the United Nations offices in Vienna, Geneva, and Nairobi, and at the United Nations information centres and other entities in many cities throughout the world. At Headquarters, the Committee held a special meeting with the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/11, the Committee organized an exhibit, entitled "The Palestinian People: Everlasting Roots, Infinite Horizons", showcasing photos of eminent Palestinian individuals and groups in different walks of life. Palestinian Arab Idol Star Ameer Dandan performed on the occasion.

### 4. Programme of international meetings and conferences

62. During the reporting period, the Committee organized several international events,[31] including:

*Committee delegation visit to the United Republic of Tanzania*

63. The purpose of the visit to the United Republic of Tanzania (3–6 December 2017) was to mobilize engagement for the two-State solution in that country and to inform local public opinion about the life of the Palestinian people after 50 years of Israeli occupation.

64. The delegation held meetings with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation and the Minister of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports. The delegation also met with representatives of civil society organizations and the media and with a former Prime Minister and erstwhile Secretary-General of the African Union. A public lecture was organized at a local conference centre.

65. Interlocutors reaffirmed that the United Republic of Tanzania was opposed to the foreign occupation of territory or its acquisition by force, and that it remained committed to the two-State solution. The delegation received requests for more outreach and information in East Africa, including in the major regional language, Kiswahili.

*Committee delegation visit to Uganda*

66. The objective of the visit to Uganda (26–28 February 2018) was to strengthen political and diplomatic ties, enhance the support of that country for the two-State solution and understand the evolving position of the African countries on the question of Palestine.

67. The delegation held meetings with the President, the Prime Minister and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, as well as the Speaker of Parliament and the Chair of the Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs. At Makerere University,

[31] For detailed reports of each event, see www.un.org/unispal/events/international-conferences/ and www.un.org/unispal/delegation-visit/.

the delegation had an interactive discussion with faculty and students. The delegation also met with representatives of civil society organizations.

68. Interlocutors reiterated the support of Uganda for the work of the Committee and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. They also inquired about the concrete actions that the Committee was undertaking at United Nations Headquarters. They urged the Committee to focus on links between businesses and the Israeli occupation and to mobilize civil society, especially in the United States and Europe.

*Committee delegation visit to Panama*

69. The purpose of the visit to Panama (9 and 10 April 2018) was to enhance the support of that country for the two-State solution and advocate the recognition of the State of Palestine. The visit took place as part of the Committee's outreach efforts in Latin America.

70. The delegation held meetings with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. Other activities included a briefing to trainees at the Diplomatic Academy and a conference hosted by the Departments of Law and Political Science and of Public Administration of the University of Panama. The delegation also met with representatives of local Palestinian solidarity groups and of the Palestinian diaspora.

71. Government interlocutors highlighted the traditional position of Panama, which was to foster dialogue and facilitate solutions. They informed the Committee about the intention to open a liaison office of Panama in Ramallah, as a first step toward strengthening relations with the State of Palestine. The encounters with the public and local media attention to the visit also indicated strong interest in the question of Palestine and support for the rights of the Palestinian people.

*International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem in Rabat, supported by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation*

72. The International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, held in Rabat from 26 to 28 June 2018 under the theme "The question of Jerusalem after 50 years of occupation and 25 years of the Osto Accords", brought together Palestinian, Israeli and international experts and representatives of the diplomatic community and of civil society to provide up-to-date information on the current situation in East Jerusalem, examine the latest legal developments having an impact on the political and social status of Palestinians, and explore practical ways for the international community to support the resilience and development of Jerusalem, in particular its youth.

73. The key messages and recommendations included the following: Jerusalem is a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations; recent developments in Jerusalem, taken against international consensus and Security Council resolutions, have turned the focus back on the conflict, including the question of Jerusalem; the fundamental problem is the Israeli occupation, and Israeli reluctance to recognize the Palestinian people as an equal has resulted in a colonizer/colonized power dynamic between the two peoples; Israeli proposals for Palestinians in East Jerusalem to participate in local governance are a call for a de facto acceptance of the annexation of East Jerusalem; initiatives should be launched to provide socioeconomic and political support to Palestinians in Jerusalem and to enable them to stay in the city; international and regional organizations, such as the European Union, should take a more active political role and not restrict themselves to development funding; and future meetings on the question of Jerusalem should also be held outside the Arab Islamic world.

### 5. Cooperation with intergovernmental and regional organizations

74. Throughout the year, the Committee continued its cooperation with intergovernmental organizations. The Committee appreciates the active participation of the representatives of those organizations in the various international events held under its auspices and the co-sponsorship provided by OIC to organize the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem. The African Union, LAS and OIC, as observers to the Committee, regularly attend the meetings of the Committee and its Working Group and participate in their work.

75. The Chair of the Committee delivered a statement at the forty-fifth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, in Dhaka, on 5 and 6 May 2018.

### 6. Cooperation with civil society

76. The Working Group of the Committee, chaired by Malta and supported by the Division for Palestinian Rights, collaborates with civil society organizations, promoting the rights of Palestinian through the following activities:

(a) Briefings provided by civil society organizations (B'Tselem, Gisha: Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, Human Rights Watch, Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling and Terrestrial Jerusalem) and organized by the Israel-Palestine NGO Working Group and United Nations agencies. The Division for Palestinian Rights facilitated briefings by the Association of International Development Agencies, the Norwegian Refugee Council and One Voice following the publication of the report of the Association of International Development Agencies entitled "50 Years of Occupation: Dispossession, Deprivation and De-development". The briefings raised awareness of the situation following recent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the Great March of Return protests and the legal and political impact of new Israeli laws on Palestinians;

(b) A meeting of the Committee Bureau with the Israel-Palestine NGO Working Group on 23 February. Participants in the meeting were provided with updated information on the work of faith-based organizations of the United States in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;

(c) Civil society organization participation in the Forum on the Question of Palestine;

(d) Closed consultations with civil society organizations based in Palestine and Israel on 16 May, just before the Forum on the Question of Palestine. The consultations, attended by more than 20 organizations, provided an opportunity to meet with the Committee Working Group and member States. The civil society organizations recommended that the Committee adopt a more proactive advocacy policy within the United Nations to call for a systematic investigation into war crimes, compile research on best practices in relation to legal solutions for protracted displacement, and explicitly address the issue of business transactions in and with illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, even in absence of an official United Nations database.

77. The Committee also invited youth representatives from East Jerusalem to attend the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem and share their perspectives about the challenges that they faced under occupation.

78. The Division for Palestinian Rights continued to issue the weekly *NGO Action News* bulletin and maintain the Committee web page on civil society to increase awareness and foster cooperation.

79. The Committee Working Group is currently reviewing the policy for civil society organization accreditation and the mechanism for selecting such organizations for participation in Committee events.

### 7. Cooperation with parliaments and interparliamentary organizations

80. The Committee continued to attach great importance to developing its relations with national and regional parliaments and their interparliamentary organizations, and it held meetings with parliamentarians in Panama, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania during Committee delegation visits, as well as with parliamentarians in Morocco in the margins of the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem.

### 8. Research, monitoring and publications

81. The Division for Palestinian Rights carried out research and monitoring activities and responded to requests for information and briefings on the question of Palestine. Under the guidance of the Committee, the Division prepared the following publications for dissemination:

(a) A monthly bulletin on actions taken by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;[32]

(b) Reports of international meetings and conferences organized under the auspices of the Committee;[33]

(c) An annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council relating to the question of Palestine.[34]

82. The Committee is of the view that the Division should continue a review of the continued relevance of existing publications in consultation with the Bureau, discontinue those that are no longer considered relevant and reallocate resources to other publications.

### 9. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

83. The Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant services of the Secretariat, continued to administer, maintain, expand and upgrade the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine[35] to heighten international awareness of the question of Palestine as well as international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and a just, peaceful solution through the work of the Committee. The Division also maintained its Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages to disseminate information about the work on the question of Palestine by the Committee and the entities of the United Nations system. The Division, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information, undertook a major redesign and expansion of the Information System, which is now and for the first time available in all six official United Nations languages, on a more modern technological platform.

### 10. Capacity-building programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine

84. As mandated in General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 72/11, and as part of its ongoing efforts to further expand the capacity-building programme for

[32] See www.un.org/unispal/?s=monthly+bulletin.

[33] See www.un.org/unispal/events/international-conferences/.

[34] See www.un.org/unispal/document/compilation-of-resolutions-and-decisions-adopted-in-2017-english-and-french-dpr-publication/.

[35] www.un.org/unispal.

staff of the Government of the State of Palestine aimed at supporting the Government in enhancing the viability and sustainability of the future independent State of Palestine, the Division for Palestinian Rights organized and administered the following capacity-building initiatives, in consultation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York:

(a) In October 2017, the programme facilitated and funded a training session on effective multilateral environmental agreements, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with the University of Eastern Finland;

(b) The same month, the programme implemented, in collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College, a training session entitled "United Nations catalytic support to South-South and triangular cooperation in implementing the 2030 Agenda";

(c) From 30 October to 1 November 2017, the programme collaborated with OHCHR and organized a study visit to observe the sixty-eighth session of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in order to help Palestinian officials to prepare for the Convention's session in 2018, when the report of the State of Palestine would be discussed;

(d) In December 2017, the programme funded the participation of Palestinian officials in a workshop on conference diplomacy and multilateral negotiations;

(e) In February 2018, the programme funded the participation of Palestinian officials in an online course organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), entitled "Women, leadership and peacebuilding";

(f) In March 2018, the Programme funded the participation of Palestinian officials in another online UNITAR course, entitled "Multilateral conferences and diplomacy".

85. The Committee paid special attention to expanding the pool of potential participants to all offices and departments of the Government of the State of Palestine, and it gave special consideration to achieving gender balance in the selection of candidates for its capacity-building programme. The Committee notes that, in September 2017, the annual capacity-building programme for Palestinian officials at United Nations Headquarters was not implemented for the first time since its advent, because candidates selected for the programme were unable to obtain visas to travel to New York in time.

86. The Division is currently undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the programme, to make it more responsive to Palestinian capacity-building needs.

# Chapter VI

## Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/12

87. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine in accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/12.

88. The Department held an international media seminar on peace in the Middle East in Vienna, on 5 and 6 October 2017, which focused on media narratives and public perceptions from Israeli and Palestinian perspectives; and the conflict through the lens of international media.

89. The Department organized its annual training programme for 10 Palestinian journalists from 30 October to 1 December 2017, thereby bringing to 190 the number of journalists trained under the programme since its inception, in 1995.

90. The Department completed a major review and update of its permanent exhibit on the question of Palestine, located along the guided tour route of United Nations Headquarters.

91. The Department issued a total of 90 press releases covering meetings, in English and French, and disseminated news and information about issues and developments related to the question of Palestine. All open intergovernmental meetings on the subject were covered by the United Nations Television and Video, United Nations Photo and the Webcast Unit.

92. United Nations News, and its Arabic unit in particular, produced a series of interviews with senior officials and policymakers. The *Yearbook of the United Nations* continued to cover relevant statements, resolutions, events and actions taken by the Committee. The first issue of *UN Chronicle* in 2018 contained an article focusing on a training programme in Palestine to achieve environmental sustainability in the region.[36]

93. The global network of United Nations information centres organized a wide range of activities, including briefings, exhibitions, film screenings, workshops, social media campaigns and commemorations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Information centres across the world also helped to promote at the local level "Dignity is priceless", the global fundraising campaign launched by UNWRA in January 2018.

[36] Available at https://unchronicle.un.org/article/cewas-middle-east-supporting-entrepreneurs-address-water-sanitation-and-resource-management.

# Chapter VII
## Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

94. On the basis of its deliberations at Committee and Bureau meetings, Committee briefings, delegation visits, international conferences and events involving Member States, civil society organizations, and regional organizations, the Committee has developed the recommendations listed below.

95. Recalling that 2018 marked the seventieth anniversary of the expulsion of Palestine refugees from their homeland in 1948, remembered as the Nakbah (the catastrophe), and fifty-first anniversary of the Israeli occupation, the Committee urges the international community to redouble its efforts towards the achievement of the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map of the Quartet.

96. The Committee reiterates the need to reframe the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is not a conflict between two parties over disputed territory. It is one of one State occupying, colonizing and annexing the territory of another State.

97. The Committee supports revising the existing model of bilateral negotiations into an expanded multilateral framework that includes key regional partners, with a view to reviving the peace process with a credible political horizon. In this context, the Committee welcomes the eight-point plan presented to the Security Council by President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, on 20 February 2018.

98. Any resolution of the conflict requires a comprehensive regional solution, such as that offered by the Arab Peace Initiative. The Committee will enhance its cooperation with LAS and OIC. The Committee calls upon other international and regional organizations, such as the European Union, to take on a more politically active role in mediating an end to the conflict.

99. The Committee acknowledges that intra-Palestinian unity is critical to achieving an independent State of Palestine. The Committee offers its services and support to local, regional and international efforts to advance the unity process.

100. The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to ensure the accountability and implementation of the long-standing parameters for peace stated in relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The Committee requests the Secretary-General to continue to present his reports to the Council on the implementation of the resolution in a written format and, pursuant to paragraph 5 of the resolution, to include in his reports references to implementation by Member States. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of the resolution, the Committee also calls upon the Council to examine practical ways and means to secure the full implementation of relevant Council resolutions.

101. The Committee underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, in particular with respect to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It looks forward to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights producing expeditiously a database of all business enterprises engaged in certain Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as mandated by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 31/36.

102. The Committee calls upon the international community to shift from a humanitarian to a political and human rights framework in addressing the plight of the Palestinian people. It demands an end to the 11-year old Israeli air, land and sea blockade of Gaza and the lifting of all closures within the framework of Security

Council resolution 1860 (2009). It calls upon international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance, the reconstruction process and economic recovery, which are essential to alleviate the distress of Palestinians, including women and children.

103. The Committee deems unilateral decisions by Member States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the transfer of embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as null and void, as they are in violation of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). The Committee calls upon Member States to rescind those decisions. Jerusalem remains a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions.

104. The Committee deplores the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians, including during the protests in the Gaza Strip in 2018. The Committee hopes that every support will be provided to the Commission of Inquiry mandated by the Human Rights Council to conclude expeditiously its investigation into violations committed on the fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip during those protests.

105. The Committee urges Member States and the Organization to remind Israel of its obligations under international law. It welcomes the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution ES-10/20 and emphasizes the need for the implementation of an international protection mechanism that can credibly ensure the safety and welfare of Palestinian civilians.

106. The Committee emphasizes the importance of the acknowledgment by Israel of the Nakbah and its impact upon the Palestinian people as a necessary requirement for a viable and lasting peace. Palestine refugees should be treated as dispossessed nationals of a country — Palestine — rather than stateless refugees. It strongly advocates the right to return (or compensation) of the Palestine refugees, as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Committee further encourages all Member States to work collectively to fund UNRWA sufficiently and predictably, in particular in view of the unprecedented shortfall in its funding.

107. The Committee notes with appreciation the diligent contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights in support of its mandate and requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support for all aspects of its mandate.

108. The Committee will continue, through its mandated activities implemented by the Division, to raise international awareness as well as international support for the rights of the Palestinian people. In that context, the Committee recognizes the growing importance of cooperation among developing countries and regional and subregional organizations within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation for sharing replicable experiences of achieving self-determination and independence.

109. The Committee requests the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information, which has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of the relevant issues.

110. The Committee highly values civil society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people and will continue to expand its efforts to engage civil society organizations, including by regularly convening civil society forums. It encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions to promote the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and full recognition of the State of Palestine and its independence.

111. The Committee intends to work closely with other United Nations actors and entities, including the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and UNRWA, to synergize efforts in fields of common concern and uphold the permanent responsibility of the Organization towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with international law. The Committee wishes to express its deep appreciation to its partners, and in particular OIC, for the contribution of extrabudgetary resources and their active participation in its conferences and events.

112. Lastly, the Committee urges its members, observer States and others to participate actively in its programme of activities. The Committee will also enhance its outreach to all Member States and regional groups at the United Nations to take a more effective approach towards the achievement of the two-State solution, and to expand the Committee's membership as a form of political support for the resolution of the question of Palestine. The Committee calls upon all Member States to join in this endeavour, and invites the General Assembly to reconfirm its mandate in recognition of the importance of its role.

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